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Security Council

Sixty-third year

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5915th meeting

Wednesday, 18 June 2008, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Khalilzad	(United States of America)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Security Council mission to Africa (31 May to 10 June 2008)

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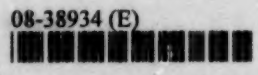

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Security Council mission to Africa (31 May to 10 June 2008)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Council will hear briefings by the four ambassadors who led the Security Council mission to Africa: His Excellency Mr. Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa, and His Excellency Sir John Sawers, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, who together led the mission to Djibouti in connection with the situation in Somalia, and to the Sudan; His Excellency Mr. Jean-Maurice Ripert, Permanent Representative of France, who led the mission to Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and His Excellency Mr. Michel Kafando, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso, who led the mission to Côte d'Ivoire.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and of the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Africa.

I will first give the floor to Ambassador Kumalo and then to Ambassador Sawers in their capacity as joint leaders of the mission on Somalia.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I have the honour to report on the portion of Security Council trip that dealt with the issues of Somalia and Sudan. As you have already stated, Mr. President, I had the honour to co-lead that segment with my colleague, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom.

To start with my own conclusions on the Somalia trip, the people of Somalia had an opportunity that is not readily available: to be able to put their case before the members of the Security Council, who are continuously considering the issue of Somalia.

We met with the Somali parties in Djibouti because that was where the delegation of the Transitional Federal Government was meeting with the opposition groups, including a group called the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, to try to agree on a way out of the difficulties that their country has been engaged in for the past 18 years.

We began our meeting in Djibouti by being honoured by the presence of the Prime Minister of Djibouti, who came to welcome the Security Council, on behalf of the Government and people of Djibouti, to his country for those meetings. Regarding our Somali meetings, we began meeting with the President of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, who stressed to us his willingness to find a way out of his country's difficulties. The President of Somalia made it very clear that his Government was willing to engage in dialogue and reach agreement with all the parties in Somalia.

After that, we met with an African Union delegation, which also represented the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), led by the Peace and Security Commissioner, Ambassador Lamamra. They also told us that they were committed to assisting the people of Somalia in getting out of the situation they are in.

It became very clear, after meeting also with representatives of the opposition parties and others, that the primary issue in Somalia was bringing about security in the country and a political process that could move the situation forward. But they said that, at the heart of the parties' difficulty was the presence of the Ethiopian troops. Of course, what was made very clear by the President of the Transitional Federal Government, who had invited the Ethiopian troops, was the fact that the Ethiopian troops were playing an important role of maintaining security in Somalia.

However, both the Government and the opposition parties foresaw a time when those troops would leave, after the security situation in Somalia had improved. The debate was over whether the troops should leave before the security situation stabilized, or after there had been a political agreement among the parties and security was established. The Government was adamant that there had first to be a political agreement among the parties so that there would be no vacuum. The opposition party and civil society representatives we met with were arguing the opposite.

But the good news is that, in the end, we learned after we had left that both parties had reached an agreement. They realized that they first had to create a security environment in Somalia that was guaranteed,

so as to allow all the other foreign troops to leave the country. But we were struck by the commitment of all the people we talked to, whether it was the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, civil society or even the United Nations country team, in their hope that Somalia was at a different stage than at any other time. That is because there appeared to be a willingness among the majority of the parties to find a political way out of the situation that they found themselves in.

We met with the country team, which gave us insights about other issues that are very urgent in Somalia. For instance, we were told by the country team that the Somali shilling had collapsed and that this has had a very adverse impact on the economy. Additionally, three years of drought and the global food crisis had not helped the people of Somalia, but had increased the strain in the humanitarian situation. And, of course, the lack of security, even for humanitarian workers in Somalia, was also an urgent matter facing the people.

However, all in all, the people have realized that the way out for Somalia is, first, to establish a political process involving as many groups and parties as possible so that the security situation could improve. Once the security situation has improved, they realize, their situation and their livelihoods would, indeed, improve as well.

We left Djibouti very encouraged that the delegations of the Government and civil society and the opposition parties that were there would find a way out of this dilemma. Indeed, after we left Djibouti it was reported that they had reached agreement. Of course, this was not an agreement among all the parties and groups in Somalia, so those who were outside the agreement criticized it. But, one thing cannot be denied: for the first time, there appears to be a critical mass of Somali parties and groups that want peace to emerge from the situation.

Thus, we are monitoring the situation in Somalia and are looking forward to receiving a further report and update from Mr. Ould Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who was our host for these meetings, and to seeing whether this situation continues.

The Security Council reiterated the intention that is contained in the resolution, namely, that if there is an improvement in the security situation in Somalia and if the parties come together on a political agreement, and once there is an indication that the situation on the ground has improved, the Security Council would then consider a mission that could take over from United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM).

I think that this is a very encouraging goal that the Somali people have clung to, and I think that the meetings they have had have really shown that they are committed to that.

Finally, none of these meetings are possible without the anonymous people who assist us in everything we do: the Secretariat, the security people, the country teams and the other people on the ground, who always make these trips possible. I want to conclude paying tribute to them and saying that we could not do our work as well as we try to do it without their assistance.

I am sure that the Permanent Representative of France, when he speaks, will also mention other people who were unexpectedly involved in our trip. The Government of Rwanda, for example, was helpful to us when we ran into some logistical problems. I just mention this in order to thank all those men and women who serve the United Nations throughout the African continent in the most difficult situations and all of those who assisted us and all of the Governments that were there to assist us as well. To them, I would like to say that we appreciate their efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Sir John Sawers of the United Kingdom.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I think I am the last to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency, Sir. It has been a very effective presidency so far, and we look for even more golden eggs being laid in the coming two weeks.

Before offering further remarks on Somalia, I would like to comment on the relevance of this latest mission to the work of the Security Council. We, as a Council, devote over half of our time to Africa and we continue to make some of the most impressive advances there, but we also suffer ongoing and often serious setbacks to out work.

We have approximately 60,000 United Nations peacekeepers deployed in Africa. The Council has tried to chart a course on the various conflicts there. We have also made efforts to build peace, take forward post-conflict reconstruction and address the humanitarian situation. I believe that more than half of

our resolutions and presidential statements so far this year have been devoted to Africa. So it is absolutely right that the Council should make a point of deploying missions to Africa so we can see, first hand, the situations with which we are dealing.

My good friend and colleague Ambassador Kumalo has given a thorough report on our discussions on Somalia. Let me just add a few comments to what he said. When we were in Djibouti, the second round of talks had just begun between the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), under the excellent auspices of Mr. Ould Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Like Ambassador Kumalo, I think we are all encouraged by the agreement initialled by the two parties on 9 June, committing them to a cessation of hostilities and the promotion of a peaceful environment in Somalia. We congratulate the parties on what we hope will be a significant step towards re-establishing stability and law and order in their country.

It is hard to ignore the long list of peace agreements in Somalia that have foundered, but we, as a Council, must do what we can to prevent this agreement from joining that list.

The mission was also encouraged to hear both President Ahmed's and Sheikh Sharif's personal commitment to peace, reconciliation and democracy in Somalia and their commitment to upholding human rights and humanitarian law and facilitating humanitarian relief to the millions of Somali people who need it. Such commitments are crucial given the increasing incidence of internal displacement in Somalia, ongoing conflict, social unrest and food crisis. Council members flagged in particular the need to prevent all and any gender-based violence.

I think the Council now needs to focus on three main issues: first, how best we can continue to support Mr. Ould Abdallah in his efforts to provide practical assistance and make further political progress; secondly, how best we can lend our support to the agreement initialled between the Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia; and thirdly, perhaps the most difficult, how we as a Council can enhance the international security presence on the ground in Somalia subject to continued progress in the political process and improvement of the security situation on the ground.

Like my colleague Ambassador Kumalo, I would like to pay tribute to all those who are working for the United Nations on the ground and to the Government of Djibouti for hosting these pivotal talks as well as our own visit.

Following our meetings in Djibouti, the Council travelled to Sudan. I would like to give an initial report on that; I think Ambassador Kumalo would like to add a few comments after I have spoken. We were co-leaders in both countries, and it was a very fruitful partnership. I very much enjoyed it and benefited from his wisdom and experience.

In the Sudan, we went first to Djuba to talk with Vice-President Salva Kiir, and then to Khartoum to meet with President Al-Bashir and representatives from both main parties in the coalition, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP). Finally, we went to Darfur itself. The discussions focused on the two crucial issues of the United Nations engagement, that is, the North-South agreement — The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) — and Darfur.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement remains the bedrock of peace in Sudan. The Council arrived in Djuba shortly after the flattening of the city of Abyei, which had led to the entire population of the town fleeing. The Council was reassured by both Vice-President Salva Kiir and President Al-Bashir that they both remain committed to peace. It seemed to us that neither wishes to go back to war, although war is not always the result of planning and intention.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement is fragile, and the Council came away convinced that we have to do all that we can to support the parties in implementing it. Council members welcomed the assurance by all parties that the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) will be given uninhibited access to Abyei and that Sudanese troops would withdraw from the town.

As we left, discussions were under way between the parties about a new joint integrated unit to take responsibility for security, and shortly after we left, we learned that the NCP and the SPLM had agreed to take the matter to an independent international tribunal. That is a welcomed development.

We came away believing that UNMIS needed to do more to support the Comprehensive Peace

Agreement, in particular to put in place practical support for the elections in 2009 and the referendums in 2011, and to improve security arrangements between the two parties. And, most immediately, in Abyei it was shown that UNMIS could do more and that it should interpret its mandate more robustly than it has done so far if it is to contribute to stability and to protect civilians.

On Darfur, the Council's discussions focused on the four tracks where progress is needed to solve the crisis. First, on peacekeeping, President Al-Bashir assured the Council that Sudan would take the necessary steps to facilitate the full deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), including by improving logistical arrangements such as customs and visa procedures. That was urgently needed and was welcome.

President Al-Bashir also agreed to improvements to Darfur's road and air infrastructure, including allowing the United Nations to help upgrade airport capacity and enabling the United Nations to use the airports 24 hours a day. It was also agreed to better facilitate the transit of goods, materials and equipment across Sudan to Darfur, including providing security for all such transits. Those are points that we hope the Secretariat will now urgently take forward.

The Council provided the presidential adviser, Nafi Ali Nafi, with a list of areas in which UNAMID needs assistance. Council members welcomed President Al-Bashir's agreement to receive troops from Nepal and Thailand as soon as Egyptian and Ethiopian troops had arrived, and I hope the Secretariat will be able to provide the Council with a specific date for that before long.

The second track is the political one, and no matter how well resourced UNAMID is, it will never be successful as a peacekeeping operation if there is not first a peace to keep. A chief mediator needs to be appointed rapidly, as President Al-Bashir himself called for. We hope that such a figure will be able to spearhead the United Nations and African Union efforts on Darfur. President Al-Bashir rightly highlighted the failure of a number of rebel groups to engage in a new political process, and we call on all groups to do so.

President Al-Bashir alleged the support of the Government of Chad for certain groups. The Council underlined with President Al-Bashir its statement of 13 May (S/PRST/2008/15) and its condemnation of the Justice and Equality Movement attack on Omdurman. However, peace in Darfur will not be possible without peace and understanding between Sudan and Chad. It is essential that the leaders of both countries implement the Dakar accord.

The third track is humanitarian. Members of the Council observed first-hand the conditions in one of the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Zam Zam camp, and we met with humanitarian organizations. The IDPs detailed attacks by Janjaweed rebels and Sudanese armed forces. They also complained that security in the camp was poor, owing to militia activity. Food access was also so poor that the World Food Programme has halved rations to the IDPs and may have to halve them again. President Al-Bashir said the Government remained committed to the March 2007 humanitarian communiqué with the United Nations, but Sudanese officials were, according to accounts we heard on the ground, still placing obstacles to humanitarian relief. The Council urged President Al-Bashir to ensure that Sudan implements the communiqué in full, and that the mechanisms for resolving practical problems are efficient and effective.

The final track is tackling impunity. Council members stressed their expectation that the Government of Sudan would cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in line with resolution 1593 (2005), including through the arrest and handover of the two indictees. Regrettably, President Al-Bashir told the Council that Sudan would not cooperate with the ICC. The Council has since reaffirmed, through its statement earlier this week (S/PRST/2008/21), the importance of Sudan reconsidering its whole approach to the ICC and establishing a pattern of cooperation, which hitherto has been completely absent.

In summary, I can say that some progress has been made on UNAMID, but much more needs to be done. The political process is badly in need of new energy. The humanitarian and security situations continue to worsen. Next month, UNAMID's mandate expires, and the Council will need to adopt a new resolution on Darfur. The Council will need to give this very careful consideration. The mission of the Council members brought home that we have not seen the progress we expected when we adopted resolution 1769 (2007) last July.

The situation in Sudan remains one of the toughest and most complex challenges for the Council. The progress we make both on the CPA and in Darfur will impact on the lives of the people of Sudan, and we bear a heavy responsibility.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Kumalo for any comments he might have on the mission to Sudan.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): I shall be very brief, because I fully agree with the report that Ambassador Sawers has just given. However, there is one issue that I want to highlight. In my humble opinion, the Council needs to pay much more attention to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). I was among those who, I suppose because we were on the ground, were very shocked at how under-resourced UNAMID is. Of course, that is simply because UNAMID is still being put together.

But I want to put on record that this under-resourcing of UNAMID is something that has to be watched. I will give two quick examples. When we visited the people in the camp in Darfur, who told us that they did not feel safe there, that they were afraid, that they might be attacked, it was very humbling to realize that UNAMID was not at the strength that would enable it to actually respond to those people's fears. That is very worrisome. The humanitarian workers talked about the difficult, at times very unsafe conditions under which they have to service the people in the camps and UNAMID. They also spoke about corridors of safety that allow them to do their work. UNAMID is nowhere near up to strength such that it can help in that way.

I am bringing this up to say that, as we work on that issue in the future, I think the issue of UNAMID, its strength and the conditions under which it operates really needs more attention from the Council to assist our colleagues in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and our extremely valiant UNAMID friends on the ground to do their work even better.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Ripert, who led the Council mission to Chad and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, on behalf of the entire delegation, I would like to thank the Secretariat, the Security Council staff and the United Nations security services, for their invaluable assistance and for the enormous amount of wonderful organizational work they did during our trip under very difficult working and transportation conditions.

I would also like to say what a good reception the mission received and how well it was supported, how much transparency there was from the Governments of Chad and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to thank the Government of Rwanda: because of the unplanned circumstances that required us to extend our stay in Goma, it provided invaluable assistance that enabled us to travel to Côte d'Ivoire without diminishing the value of our visit. I would like to thank Mr. Victor da Silva Angelo and Mr. Alan Doss, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, who helped us enormously.

I led the Council mission to eastern Chad — Abéché and Goz Beida — as well as to N'Djamena. It was very important that the Council go to eastern Chad because it is at the centre of the Council's mandate for the multidimensional presence authorized by resolution 1778 (2007), and also because the mission was able to see first-hand the situation and the threats that are still hanging over the heads of the inhabitants, whether local people, Chadian internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees from Darfur. Recent events that have affected the refugees, the IDPs and the humanitarian community alike, show how volatile the situation is.

On 6 June, the Security Council mission, with the effective support of MINURCAT — and in particular that of Mr. Angelo and Ms. Rima Salah, humanitarian assistance coordinator — visited the refugee camp at Djabal and then the camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) at Gouroukoun. The mission visited camps and other facilities operated by the international community and by the Chadians themselves, and we were able to speak freely with camp populations and with humanitarian workers. It was striking that refugees — who benefit more directly from the international community's involvement — in some ways enjoy better living conditions than IDPs — who in turn enjoy better living conditions than local populations. It is remarkable that good relations among those three categories of people, at a time when the total population of the Goz Beida area has exploded, have been maintained in spite of the inevitable competition for resources such as water and firewood. I think it is important here to stress the importance of the

development and reconstruction effort in the affected areas, as called for in resolution 1778 (2007).

Refugees in the Djabal camp described to Council members the conditions under which they had to flee Darfur and the attacks they experienced. Many individuals said that their villages had been the targets of attacks, including recent aerial bombardments.

Both refugees and IDPs told us that acts of violence — including theft, the "recruitment" of child soldiers, etc. — regularly occurred in the camps. The groups of women with whom the Security Council mission met complained of a high number of incidents of sexual violence. The populations we met did not, however, say where the armed militias guilty of such violence came from. They all wanted the Security Council to take action to improve security in the area. As they grow in strength, MINURCAT and EUFOR will make it possible to respond better to this insistent demand for security. The Governor of Goz Beida gave us his assessment, which is that armed groups from the Sudan, in particular the Janjaweed, posed the principal threat to these populations.

At a meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations and international humanitarian organizations, the mission heard of the increasing number of acts of violence affecting humanitarian workers: there have been two deaths since the beginning of the year, and 26 vehicles have been stolen. Humanitarian aid workers have insistently called for better road security, in particular in the Goz Beida area on routes between camps and villages, without desiring the militarization of their convoys.

In these conditions, the Security Council mission conveyed its encouragement to MINURCAT, which is beginning its deployment, and to EUFOR, some 3,000 of whose personnel are already securing the area, as mandated in resolution 1778 (2007). I note too that, in accordance with its mandate, EUFOR protected civilian populations, including those in the Djabal camp and humanitarian workers, during the recent events.

The Security Council mission called on MINURCAT to do everything possible to hasten its deployment and to be able to fully shoulder its mandate as soon as possible. We were encouraged by the fact that the training of the 71 Chadian commanders in the Integrated Security Detachment — the Détachement intégré de sécurité (DIS) — had been completed and that the training of DIS gendarmes had begun.

The mission also noted the excellent relations between MINURCAT and EUFOR and the very good cooperation that has been forged with the Chadian authorities.

At N'Djamena, the Security Council mission, unfortunately, was unable to meet with President Deby, who had left the country for Libya. President Deby offered to receive the mission the following morning, but that was not possible because the mission had a meeting with President Kabila and the entire programme would have been delayed. The Council mission was received by Prime Minister Youssouf Saleh Abbas, in the presence of officials including the Minister of Communications, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Director-General of the Coordination nationale d'appui à la force internationale (CONAFIT), the body established by Chad to provide liaison with the international community. The Security Council mission recalled the importance that the Council attaches to the sovereignty, independence and unity of Chad, and it encouraged the Government to continue along the path of political dialogue, with respect for the constitutional framework, as set out in the 13 August 2007 agreement. At the same time, we encouraged it to strengthen the rule of law and enhance the promotion and defence of human rights. As it had done at Khartoum, the mission called on the Chadian authorities to commit themselves to the path of dialogue with their neighbour and urged the two countries to distance themselves from armed groups. In the case of Chad, we stressed the necessity of further distancing itself from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

Finally, the mission recalled that the Council would carefully study the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General in September on the future of the present arrangements and on a possible peacekeeping operation to succeed EUFOR.

The Chadian Prime Minister welcomed the efforts of the international community and stressed his country's total commitment to cooperate fully with MINURCAT and EUFOR. He denounced the role of the Sudan and indicated that Chad had not supported the JEM attack on Khartoum, which indeed had been condemned by the Chadian Government. The Security Council mission was encouraged by the fact that the

Prime Minister recalled Chad's determination to remain engaged in the process defined by the Dakar agreement, with the support of Libya and the Republic of the Congo as mediators; their ministers would be going to Brazzaville a few days later.

The Security Council mission's visit to Chad enabled it to see for itself the Darfur conflict's consequences in eastern Chad, as well as the threats hanging over the civilian population. In our view, it is necessary for the Council to continue along its path, at a time when for some days Chad has been the target of attacks by illegal armed groups, which are destabilizing the eastern part of the country and undermining ongoing humanitarian operations. As it has done in a presidential statement, the Council should again reaffirm its support for the United Nations operations.

I turn now to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We began with a working session in Kinshasa with Mr. Alan Doss, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, his Deputy, Mr. Ross Mountain, and their main colleagues. The Security Council mission also met with Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga, who was accompanied by officials including the Minister of State for the Interior and Ministers for defence, foreign affairs, justice and gender issues; we also met with the presiding officers of the two legislative chambers — the National Assembly and the Senate — in the presence of representatives of all political groupings including the opposition. The Security Council mission also had an audience with President Joseph Kabila.

In Goma, the Security Council mission spoke with the Governor of North Kivu before a working lunch with Father Malu Malu, who is responsible for preparing local elections and is the national coordinator of the Amani security, pacification, stabilization and reconstruction programme, and with the members of the joint technical commission on peace and security, the main monitoring body for the Goma process. Some members of the Security Council mission then visited the Mugunga II IDP camp while, at facilities of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), another group met with civil society representatives, including representatives of women's associations.

The overall purpose of the mission was to indicate the Security Council's commitment to contributing to building peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular through MONUC.

The mission took place a few months after the launch of the Nairobi and Goma processes, which the Council has supported, including through its adoption of resolution 1804 (2008). Our visit to North Kivu took place after a bloody 4 June attack by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) against the population of an IDP camp. The situation in the eastern part of the country would thus be the principal subject of our meetings.

We welcomed the positive dynamic created by the Nairobi joint communiqué of 9 November 2007, which opens the path to active cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, as well as by the conference which took place in Goma last January. We recalled that in resolution 1804 (2008) the Council had asked the armed groups operating in the east, and especially the Forces démocratiques de la libération du Rwanda (FDLR), to immediately lay down their arms and to participate in the voluntary disarmament and repatriation process. We encouraged the Government's efforts to that effect. The mission noted with great satisfaction the convergence of the approach of all Congolese political actors with that of the Security Council and their commitment to the Goma and Nairobi processes. We were encouraged to note the determination of the Congolese authorities to pursue the improvement of their relations with Rwanda and with Uganda. Close cooperation between the Congolese and Ugandan Governments exists to restore peace and security to the border areas where the Lord's Resistance Army is attacking civilian populations.

We noted in the Mugunga II camp as well as during our discussions with civil society that this dynamic has unfortunately not yet had the time to fully bear fruit. Violence is continuing, in particular, sexual violence against women. Too often, impunity remains the rule. From this point of view, we noted that, unfortunately, the militias remain de facto the recourse preferred by the people who, in the absence of the State, tend to turn to armed groups that in turn maintain ethnic divisions and discrimination. From this point of view, and in order to strengthen MONUC's action, it is essential, according to the Special Representative, to give MONUC greater resources to confront armed groups, in particular resources for obtaining intelligence and for carrying out commando operations missions. It also seems essential — and I will come

back to this point — to develop a Congolese State presence closer to the population.

With respect to the humanitarian situation, the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo told us that they completely understood the gravity of the situation. President Kabila also assured the Council of his determination to fight impunity; he mentioned the exemplary collaboration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the International Criminal Court. The Council welcomed his assurances on this point. The Government, the local authorities and the civilian population have stated their appreciation for the role played by MONUC and want it to be able, as I said earlier, to react more quickly in case of attack.

That is one reason why we have insisted on strengthening the country's democratic institutions, the role of the opposition, decentralization and the organization of local elections. The Security Council mission noted with satisfaction planned and ongoing reforms in relation to the status of the opposition, the financing of political parties, the in-depth reform of the justice, security sectors and decentralization. The Congolese authorities have stated that local elections will take place in 2009. Obviously, we insisted that besides adopting democratic legislation, it was necessary to work for its implementation. I think that it is useful to recall that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has arguably, over the past four years, seen its first real period of democracy in 50 years.

We also noted the very important role played by the parliament in the implementation of the reforms that I just spoke about. We noted that the opposition is playing its full role in a political climate that appeared to us to be calm. The mission stressed the importance of the local elections to complete the electoral cycle started in 2006, as they are essential if democratic institutions are to take firm root in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The mission also underlined the importance of offering the Congolese people a peace dividend and, to this end, to bring to a positive conclusion the reforms necessary in the areas of good governance and the management of the country's natural resources.

I would like to reiterate the Council's thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, and to his deputy, Mr. Ross Mountain, as well as to all MONUC personnel, who are working closely with the people under extremely difficult conditions.

MONUC remains the largest peacekeeping operation in the world in terms of numbers of personnel. It will continue to play an irreplaceable role for the protection of the civilian populations in the east as long as the national security forces are not fully up to playing their role. At the same time, MONUC is not intended to remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo indefinitely. The country's authorities are aware of that fact. That is why it is essential to make the Nairobi and Goma processes to succeed, to strengthen democratic institutions and to complete security sector reform. In our view, it will only be with progress in these areas that MONUC's force levels can be gradually reduced.

I would like to say in conclusion that we have been encouraged by the determination of the authorities to allow the Congolese people themselves take their destiny in their own hands. The Congolese political forces are fully aware of the expectations of the population in this regard. In those conditions, it seems essential to us that the Security Council continue to fully support the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Kafando, who led the Security Council mission to Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the members of the Security Council for their valued contribution to the success of the mission which I had the honour to lead to Côte d'Ivoire on Monday, 9 June 2008.

The aim of the mission — whose terms of reference we approved together — was to determine the progress made by Ivorian political players in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, with a view to the holding of credible, free and transparent presidential elections. The mission was therefore to meet the main Ivorian political players, the military and administrative authorities, the facilitators of the political process, representatives of the United Nations system, civil society players and the technical operator involved in the electoral process.

We also had meetings with officials of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), led by

the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Choi; a delegation from the Convention de la société civile; the President of the Rassemblement des républicains, Mr. Allasane Ouattara; the President of the Independent Electoral Commission, Mr. Beugre Mambé; the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the defence and security forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the Forces Nouvelles, Generals Philippe Mangou and Soumaila Bakayoko; the Commander of Operation Licorne, General Bruno Clément-Bollée; representatives of the National Statistics Institute and the technical company SAGEM; a delegation of the Forces Nouvelles led by General Soumaila Bakayoko; the Special Representative of the Facilitator, Mr. Bureima Badini; and the President of the Republic, Mr. Laurent Gbagbo.

The meeting with the President of the Republic, Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, focused on the major points of interest in the peace process. President Gbagbo first of all congratulated the Security Council and thanked it for its interest in the peace process in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and he reaffirmed his commitment to the holding of presidential elections on 30 November 2008, despite difficulties due to a lack of financial means. He thanked the international community and, in particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Facilitator, whose work he was very happy with. He thanked them for their efforts in supporting Ivorian institutions as they prepare for elections. He felt that it should be stressed to the Independent Electoral Commission, the National Statistics Institute and SAGEM that the deadline of 30 November must be respected.

The President of the Republic said that he had met his obligations with regard to the promulgation of decrees pertaining to the electoral process and the payment of the first instalment to SAGEM at the end of May 2008 so that they could begin their operations. He said that it was now up to the technical operator to accelerate their preparations for the elections.

With regard to the financial sacrifices already made by the Ivorian Government, he expressed the wish that the international community also make a contribution.

President Gbagbo asked the international community to show understanding with regard to the various commissions and operators that are involved in the electoral process. That option was adopted in order to inspire greater confidence in all Ivorian parties in joining the peace process. According to the President, such a consensus approach was chosen because he and his Government attach a great deal of importance to transparency in the voter registration process, which is very important if the elections are to be held properly.

The mission also raised with President Gbagbo the issue of the responsibility of public and private media in maintaining a constructive political climate in Côte d'Ivoire before and after the elections. President Gbagbo stated that he plans to urge the public media, in particular radio and television, to play a greater role in the peace process. The mission welcomed that intention, which is in conformity with what was requested by the opposition and civil society, in other words, fairer access to public media.

President Gbagbo reaffirmed his acceptance of the five certification criteria proposed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Choi, and encouraged him to play a constructive role among the various stakeholders in order to ensure the holding of elections according to the timetable and on the basis of the criteria accepted by all parties. Those five criteria are the maintenance of peace throughout the process; the inclusion of all stakeholders; access to State media; scrupulous respect for all stages leading to the promulgation of the electoral list; and acceptance of the results of the election. The majority of our interlocutors stressed that the Government must provide official guarantees in order to ensure that the five criteria and the related certification issues are adhered to.

On the basis of our other meetings and our own observations, we came to the following conclusions. In general, the mission was happy to see that the political situation has improved. The Ivorian parties have accepted the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, and preparations for the elections have speeded up. Certainly, considerable progress has been made over recent months with a view to respecting the timeline drawn up in the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, beginning with consensus on the date for the first round of presidential elections, which is 30 November 2008. Also, several decrees relating to the electoral process have been signed by President Gbagbo, including on the conclusion, on 15 May, of the mobile court hearings and the official launch, in mid-May, of efforts to reconstitute lost or damaged voter registration lists. Voter registration should begin on 1 July 2008, and the provisional list should be

available by 31 August, before the official publication of the definitive registry on 15 November 2008.

The Security Council mission reiterated its satisfaction at the political parties' April adoption of a code of conduct and called on them to respect their commitments and to ensure that the elections are free, open, fair and transparent.

With regard to the inclusiveness of the electoral process, civil society representatives suggested the convening of a national consensus day to consider matters pertaining to the electoral process, in particular involving the participation of civil society in the monitoring process, and to look into some of the basic causes of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire that have not been addressed by the Ouagadougou Political Agreement but that are very important for the long-term stability of the country, namely, land ownership and national reconciliation.

The President of the Independent Electoral Commission proposed a code of conduct for civil society during the electoral period and reassured the mission of his intention to launch a dialogue with civil society in the weeks to come.

Progress made on the security situation is significantly more limited. The Security Council noted in particular the conclusion of the cantonment of the Ivorian defence and security forces and the launching of that process in areas under the control of the Forces nouvelles. Our interlocutors pointed out further progress that has been made since the last Security Council mission to Côte d'Ivoire in 2007, including the elimination of the zone of confidence, the progressive elimination of the observation posts along the Green Line and the re-establishment of State administration throughout the country. They also indicated that all parties are now able to move freely throughout the country, to carry out their election campaigns and to raise public awareness with regard to the peace process.

The Independent Electoral Commission, supported by the opposition, the Forces nouvelles and civil society, has asked for greater security for their staff and for the candidates and greater freedom of movement for voters during the process of voter registration, campaigning and the election itself.

In terms of the role of the United Nations, the mission took note of the political and technical progress made in the preparations for the elections under the leadership of the Independent Electoral Commission, with the help of UNOCI and the Special Representative of the Facilitator.

The mission noted that the Government had adopted several significant decrees with regard to the electoral process. However, decrees setting out the methods for voter identification and registration as well as the respective roles of SAGEM and the National Statistical Institute have still not come into effect. However, the President of the Independent Electoral Commission pointed out that an agreement had already been reached between the two operators on those matters and that, as I said earlier, the process of voter identification and registration should begin by 1 July.

With regard to logistical preparations, the Independent Electoral Commission indicated that 80 per cent of its 415 local branch offices had already been set up throughout the country. The mission nevertheless took note of the concerns expressed by the Independent Electoral Commission, the opposition, the Forces nouvelles and civil society with regard to the financing deficit for the elections, amounting to $15 million, which is still lacking.

Still with regard to the electoral process, the Forces nouvelles, civil society and the opposition have underscored the very important role of the impartial forces in providing security for the electoral process, given the weak progress made in the dismantling of militias and the disarming of former combatants. In that respect, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Force Commander of UNOCI and Operation Licorne Commander informed the Security Council mission that the heads of the Ivorian defence and security forces, the Forces nouvelles, the Integrated Command Centre and the impartial forces are in the process of preparing a security plan for the electoral process, in cooperation with the defence and security forces of some neighbouring countries.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process has not made very much progress, in particular with regard to the Forces nouvelles. Also, the Rassemblement des républicains political party and civil society have urged the Security Council to maintain its sanctions regime and arms embargo until the peace process has become irreversible and the major activities such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the dismantling of militias and the

reunification of the army have come to an end. All interlocutors have asked the Security Council to maintain the UNOCI and Operation Licorne forces at their current levels until the elections.

In that connection, Generals Mangou and Bakayoko underlined that the cantonment of former combatants and the collection of weapons had continued, despite the constraints experienced by the Force nouvelle. The Special Representative of the Facilitator, Mr. Badini, told the mission that he hoped that the cantonments would be concluded on schedule over the next five months.

The generals also described progress made by the integrated command centre with regard to supervision of essential activities such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the dismantling of militias and the reunification of the army. They reassured the mission of the capacity of the Ivorian forces to guarantee security for the elections with the firm support of the impartial forces.

The mission took note of progress made in Côte d'Ivoire with respect to human rights, although, according to representatives of civil society, a trend towards gender-based sexual violence is continuing. With regard to the socio-economic and humanitarian situation, all interlocutors noted the threats to the peace process posed by the world food crisis and other socio-economic crises. They stressed that the humanitarian situation has been precarious in central, northern and western Côte d'Ivoire and they asked the Security Council mission to urge donors to do more to assist Côte d'Ivoire financially.

Regarding the role of the United Nations in the electoral process, as I have mentioned, the Security Council mission unreservedly reaffirmed its full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in his role of certifying the electoral process.

Following these various discussions, the Security Council reaffirmed its full support to the political process in the framework of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and encouraged all Ivorian parties to respect the timetable established for the holding of credible, free and transparent elections.

Following the mission to Côte d'Ivoire, which we can consider fruitful, and on behalf of its members, I pay tribute to the political players involved in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement for their cooperation at all levels and for their understanding. I would particularly like to thank Mr. Choi Young-Jin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Boureima Badini, Special Representative of the Facilitator, for their immense and very difficult work to find a way out of this crisis through the holding of credible and transparent elections in Côte d'Ivoire.

I would also like to thank all the Secretariat staff who accompanied us for the logistical support and daily assistance that they provided to our mission.

Finally, I would like to thank the Government of Rwanda, through its special representative, who is present here, for having provided us safe conduct to Goma from Kigali, without which we certainly would not have been able to accomplish our mission in Côte d'Ivoire.

The President: On behalf of the Council, I should like to express appreciation to all of the members of the Security Council and of the Secretariat who participated in the mission, which was very ably led by Ambassadors Kumalo, Sawers, Ripert and Kafando, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

I should also like to express appreciation to the men and women from around the world who are serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa and to all those who facilitated this mission.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.